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OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #0260/01 0861055
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 271055Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2025
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3014
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1313
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3354
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2740
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000260

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: RAIN DAMPENS PEACEFUL PROTESTS IN KYRGYZSTAN

REF: A. BISHKEK 254

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 235

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Kyrgyzstan's political opposition staged rallies at several locations across the country on March 27. Light rain helped to keep the crowds small. As of late afternoon, the rallies have been peaceful, and there were no reports of violence or clashes with police. End Summary.

Bishkek Crowd Less than 1000

[1](#)2. (SBU) The United People's Movement (UPM), a new umbrella group of opposition parties, organized the rallies to protest the government's campaign of intimidation against opposition members. The largest rally took place in Bishkek's Gorky Park, where about 800 demonstrators gathered. Demonstrators carried flags from the Ata Meken Party, the Social Democrat Party (SDPK), the Asaba party, the Ak Shumkar Party, and the Green Party. The rally, which began at 11:00 am, ended peacefully at 15:00 local.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Prominent speakers at the Bishkek rally included political figures such as UPM leader Azimbek Beknazarov, Ata Meken party leader Omurbek Tekebayev, Social Democrat MP Bakyt Beshimov, and former Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the U.S. Roza Otunbayeva. Civil society leaders, such as head of the Kylym Shamy human rights NGO Aziza Abdurasulova and Interbilim Director Asiya Sasykbayeva also addressed the crowd. Former Minister of Defense Ismail Isakov said that the opposition was demanding a "constructive dialogue" with the authorities over such issues as representation on local election commissions, equitable access to media, and ending political persecutions. Isakov said the opposition would hold "unending" rallies starting April 20 if the government did not meet their demands.

Police Presence Low-Key

¶4. (C) The only uniformed security visible at the Bishkek rally were policemen directing traffic on nearby streets, which were initially open to vehicles. However, there was a large -- and obvious -- contingent of plain-clothes policemen in the crowd and on the edges of the rally. Over 1000 riot police were staged at the Spartak Stadium, about two blocks from the rally site. In early afternoon, the police set up barricades and closed down nearby streets to regular traffic, although they did allow some traffic (e.g., area residents) to pass into the restricted area. After the rally finished, nearby streets were re-opened to traffic.

Small Rallies across Country

¶5. (C) According to press reports, turnout was light for rallies around the country: 200 in Talas, 200 in Balykchy, 100 in Karakol, 50 in Aksy, with similar numbers reported from several other districts. In Naryn, protesters were allowed to demonstrate in a park next to the Border Guards local headquarters, and Emboff reported that by mid-afternoon the crowd had dispersed. In Osh, heavy rains kept the numbers down to 30 or so protesters.

Government Takes No Chances with Students

¶6. (C) At Kyrgyz State National University, which is close to the Bishkek rally site, "minders" were sent to student dormitories to keep track of students' whereabouts. According to one professor there, he and colleagues were called into work today and were told to be prepared to help

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organize "counter demonstrations," if necessary. In Naryn, the Minister of Education visited Naryn State University last week, reportedly to warn the rector about any student participation in the rally, and the vice rector went to the rally site this morning to make sure no students were present.

Comment

¶7. (C) The rallies were low key and peaceful, and there have been no reports of provocations or security incidents. The inclement weather helped to keep the numbers down, but the announcement of early Presidential elections in July has likely shifted the opposition's attention to the upcoming campaign.
GFOELLER